



Rethinking Marxism

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Marxism as *Asketic*, Spirituality as *Phronetic*: Rethinking Praxis

Anup Dhar and Anjan Chakrabarti

This paper departs from the hegemonic notion of truth—the cognitive notion of truth—and arrives at four other notions of truth in Marx, Gandhi, Heidegger, and Foucault. It puts the four to a possible dialogue. It argues that one can get a glimpse of the cusp of Marxism and spirituality in the dialogue among the four. The work at the cusp, in turn, renders Marxism asketic and the spiritual phronetic. Thinking at the cusp also inaugurates the possibility of an anti-Oedipal future for Marxism and a this-worldly present for spirituality.

Key Words: Askesis, Class, Phronesis, Transformation, Truth

Whereas the political organization of all pre-modern societies was in some way connected to, based on, guaranteed by some faith in, or adherence to God, or some notion of ultimate reality, the modern Western state is free¹ from this connection.

—Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*

This essay is on the uneasy *and* that connects Marxian questions and spiritual quests. Conventionally, Marx and Marxism have been associated with materialism, and spirituality has been ascribed to, at times, things that are somewhat transcendental, somewhat akin to what Marx and Engels call “speculative idealism” in *The Holy Family* (Marx and Engels 1956). Critiques of Marxism have targeted materialism for its

1. The essay asks two questions. One, is it desirable to be totally and unconditionally free of “some faith”? Is such freedom from faith at the root of the problems of the modern proclivity and the current political imagination? Is “spiritual deficit” one of the fundamental problems of Marxism? Two, is it indeed free? Building on Lacan’s *Seminar XX*, Braungardt (1999) shows how “a central event in the development of Western philosophy and theology was the merger between Christian theology and Greek philosophy [Lacan shows how the Jewish response to human fragility, however, was theological, and not philosophical]... The philosopher who created a synthesis on the basis of a theism, which lasted for almost nine centuries, is Thomas Aquinas. What would we call this? Christianization of (Greek) philosophy? Or the turning Hellenic of Christianity? Does Marx’s dual critique—critique of both philosophy and theology—stem from an appreciation of this “merger” by Thomas Aquinas? Does this Marxian double critique—doubled-up critique, one critique folded into the other—then get split into (1) the Foucauldian critique of Christianization and (2) the Derridean critique of the metaphysics of presence?

mechanomorphic nature, and the hardheartedness it may precipitate (in, say, actual practices of Marxian statecraft). Critiques of spirituality have targeted its focus on individual *moksha* (liberation), its asociality (Marx argues that the “religious sentiment” is itself a social product), its proximity to capital-logic, and its rather “pop” nature in the Western world or among the elite in erstwhile colonies. Making sense of Marx beyond simple materialism and making sense of spirituality beyond simple transcendentalism is hence the focus of this essay. The connection between Marxism and spirituality is not a connection between materialism and idealism/transcendentalism but a connection between the two “beyonds”—the beyond of Marxian materialism and that of spiritual transcendentalism—which, in other words, is a rethought materialism and a rethought spiritualism: a materialism that is overdetermined by “ideas” and a spiritualism that is less transcendent; a materialism that is overdetermined by what Foucault calls the *asketic* (where “truth” is tied to the question of “being-becoming” and where “self-transformation” is the context and condition of “truth”) and a spiritualism overdetermined by what Heidegger calls *phronesis* (where “truth” is “practical” and “social” and is contingent upon “praxis” and “this-worldliness”). The curious byproduct of the spiritualization of Marxism or the Marxianization of spirituality is a somewhat secret communion that gets set up with psychoanalysis, rethought as asketic and phronetic.²

The Question of Interlocutors

We begin this section by looking closely at the possible set of interlocutors that could exist between Marxism and spirituality; one can make sense of the uneasy *and* between Marxism and spirituality only in terms of their interlocutors, by resetting or remapping the relationships between them. First is liberalism and Marxism as somewhat antagonistic interlocutors to each other; however, the “crisis” of “liberal democracies in today’s world,” as well as the *crisis of statist Marxism*, is not letting us choose between the two anymore, which was possible before; this crisis is instead demanding from us a “re-investigation of the notion of the political” (and not just liberal or Marxist politics), including importantly the “secularization of historical reason,” primarily because the *dual or simultaneous crisis of liberalism and Marxism* is coming with a simultaneous “exhaustion of the notion of ‘secularization’” (Das 2014, 13). Second is theology as antagonistic interlocutor to enlightened secular liberalism. Third is *religion* as antagonistic interlocutor to secularism (see Anzi 2014, 152–63), but secularism as a curious accompaniment of both Marxism and liberalism, and hence religion by default becomes the antagonistic interlocutor to both Marxism and liberalism. Fourth is *science* as another apposite interlocutor to both Marxism and liberalism, but scientific rationalism (or the scientific search for truth) is also the antagonistic

2. The specter of a thinker, Freud, who purportedly had nothing to do with the political but had lots to do with the noncoercive, the nonjudgmental, and with patient reorganization of desire, haunts this exchange between Marxism and spirituality: “Psychoanalysis offers a method of intervening non-violently between our overbearing conscience and our raging affects, thus forcing our moral and our ‘animal’ natures to enter into respectful reconciliation” (Erikson 1969, 439).

interlocutor to theological thinking and religion. **Idealism** is antagonistic interlocutor to Marxian materialism; thus, **“matter”** and **“spirit”** are becoming opposed as interlocutors. The modern is an opposed interlocutor to tradition, and **reason/rationality** are opposed interlocutors to irrationality/**superstition**. Finally, **flesh** and corporeality are antagonistic interlocutors to the spiritual. The contesting cosmology of the interlocutors, as enunciated above, takes the form of a polylog among four contending notions of “truth”—of Marx, Gandhi, Heidegger, and Foucault—in this essay. It argues that the polylog among the four contending but related notions of “truth” could in turn be the ground for a possible dialog between Marxism and spirituality.

It would not be out of context to take note of Marx and Engels’ anguish with respect to the spiritual in *The Holy Family*. The nature of this anguish also shows how antagonistic interlocutors (for example, **“self-consciousness”** and **“spirit”** on the one hand and “real humanism,” “flesh,” and “corporeal” on the other) are taking form in Marx (ism): **“Real humanism** has no more dangerous enemy in [Christian] Germany than **spiritualism or speculative idealism**, which substitutes ‘self-consciousness’ or the ‘spirit’³ for the real individual man ... ‘It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.’ Needless to say, this **incorporeal spirit** is spiritual only in its imagination” (Marx and Engels 1956). Marx’s attack on (speculative) idealism takes further form in *The German Ideology*. Marx (1932) wants to “liberate” men “from the **chimeras**, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they [i.e., the masses] are pining away”: “Once upon a time a valiant fellow [in Germany] had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this notion out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious concept, they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water.”⁴

The question of Marxism and spirituality thus takes many forms: liberal and religious, secular and religious, secular and theological, scientific and theological, of matter and of spirit, of flesh/corporeality and of spirit, modern and traditional. Two clusters thus come face to face: **liberalism, secularism, science, the modern, flesh/the corporeal, and materialism** on the one hand come face to face with **theology, religion, idealism, spirit, and the traditional** on the other. Though the genealogy of each division is different, the question of the unease between Marxism and spirituality remains haunted by the interconnected genealogy of each division/binary. The argument this essay makes is that to rethink this relationship, as well as to rethink the uneasy *and* between Marxism and spirituality, one will first have to **make sense of the set of interlocutors**⁵ and the genealogy of the divisions/binaries, and second, one will have to **rethink the architecture/map of the interlocutor concepts in order to also redraw** the

3. Derrida (1991, 99) shows how “we have a trio of languages: **Greek (pneuma), Latin (spiritus), German (Geist)**” and how “Heidegger does not disqualify the immense semantics of breathing, of inspiration or respiration, imprinted in Greek or Latin. He simply says they are less originary.” Marx, however, is responding to the German, to Geist. Building on Derrida’s reading of Geist in Heidegger, this essay explores which understanding of Geist Marx is responding to: would Marxism’s relationship with spirituality change, get displaced, if the understanding of Geist changes, gets displaced? The last part of the section titled “The Other Spiritual” is a reflection on three other conceptualizations of Geist (in Heidegger), conceptualizations that would render Marxism and spirituality apposite.

4. See the preface to *The German Ideology* (Marx 1932).

relationships between the interlocutors.⁶ This architecture/map of interlocutor concepts will be approached—perhaps translated—in this essay in terms of the **architecture/map of four related notions of “truth,”** in the thought of Marx, Gandhi, Heidegger, and Foucault. Such a remapping of interlocutors in terms of (rethought or redrawn) conceptions of “truth” will in turn help redraw the relationship between the interlocutors. More specifically, it will throw some light on the space of the **uneasy and** between Marxism and spirituality.

The Marxian Conception of “Truth”

Marx (2016 [1845]) begins “Theses on Feuerbach” with the question of the “chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism” (he does not begin with the chief defect of idealism!). And what is the defect? The defect is that the “thing, reality, sensuousness” is conceived only in the form of either “the object” or “of intuition” but not as “human sensuous activity, practice.”

Defect two: Feuerbach wants “sensuous objects” to be distinct from “objects of thought,” and Marx looks to be fine with this division, but “he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity.”

Defect three: In *The Essence of Christianity*, “Practice is conceived and fixed [by Feuerbach] only in its **dirty Jewish** manifestation” (Marx 2016). Why is practice Jewish? Why is practice dirty? Here Marx makes an interesting distinction—a distinction that looks to have been missed in the hypersecular rhetoric of most Marxists—between the Christian discourse on creation and the Judaic discourse on creation: “‘Dirty Jewish’—according to Marshall Berman, this is an allusion to the Jewish God of the Old Testament, who had to ‘get his hands dirty’ while making the world, and is tied up with a symbolic contrast between the Christian God of the **Word**, and the God of the **Deed**, symbolizing practical life” (Marx 2016, note 1). This distinct marking of the Deed as against the “dead” (i.e., dead or inert matter), in sharp contradistinction to Feuerbach, is key to the Marxian perspective on materialism. Marx is thus marking a distinction not just between the “real” and the “speculative,” between matter and idea, materialism and idealism, but also between the mere Word and the Deed and the distinction (or more specifically the relationship) between a rethought Word and a rethought Deed, which could be a way to rethink the relationship between Marxism and spirituality beyond the paradigmatic distinction in the Western/Occidental tradition—that of “real/speculative,” “matter/idea”—which is why Marx (2016) feels that the **“dispute over the reality or unreality of thinking”** is a “practical question” and **“it is in practice [in Deed, indeed] that man must prove the truth.”**

5. Including the ghosts/specters of interlocutors “flapping in the wings” of the nineteenth-century “alchemical theatre” in which “one of the most obsessing ghosts among the philosophers of this alchemy would ... be Hegel who ... situated the passage from the ‘philosophy of nature’ to the ‘philosophy of spirit’” (Derrida 1991, 99).

6. One note of caution: the above is put to crisis by Foucault when he brings to a troubled apposition the secular and the theological in his description of European enlightened modernity as a “secular theology” or a kind of “theological secularism.”

Defect four: “The materialist doctrine” that one is a product of “circumstances and upbringing”—in a word, of “history”—is standing on one leg (Marx 2016). It misses out on the overdetermined other side, the other leg: that one also transforms circumstances, through what Marx calls a revolutionizing of practice.⁷

Defect five: Feuerbach’s materialist turn embodies “the dissolution of the religious world into its secular basis.” But Feuerbach overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. What then is the chief thing that still needs to be done? Marx’s answer: a critique of the secular (and not just a secular critique of religion). Here Marx (2016) radically departs from liberal understandings of, and peace with, the assertion of the secular, the secular as given:

For the fact that the secular foundation detaches itself from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is precisely only to be explained by the very self-dismemberment and self-contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter itself must, therefore, first be understood in its contradiction and then revolutionized in practice by the elimination of the contradiction. Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be criticized in theory and revolutionized in practice.

Marx wishes to criticize in theory and revolutionize in practice the “secular” as well as the “earthly family.”

Defect six: It is not that the religious essence is **social**⁸; rather, the human essence, as critique of religious essence, is also social: the apparent abstraction inherent in each individual human is in reality an ensemble of social relations (spiritualism misses this ensemble of “social relations” in its conceptualization of the individual human). What is hence at stake is not civil society but human society or “socialized humanity.”

Defect seven: The social (life) is essentially practical. Even “sensuous intuition” is practical. The problem for Marx is not just that “spiritualism” or “speculative idealism” have presupposed that things take place only in “the realm of pure thought,” premised in turn on what Marx (1932) calls “unfalsified Hegelian categories” such as “substance” and “self-consciousness.” The added problem is that (old) materialism has neither turned social nor turned practical in its turning away from either spiritualism or idealism. The problem is not that the dominance of religion was being taken for granted. It is that the “secular critique of religion” requires “critique of the secular.”

7. See the last section of this essay, “An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities,” for a discussion on noncoercive yet Marxian transformation.

8. Religion has conventionally been seen as personal salvation/*moksha*. Ambedkar, like Marx, saw religion or *dhamma* as **social**. From the 1930s, Ambedkar’s lifework was to delineate two strategies for emancipation for the Dalits in India. The first was a strategy of critical legal constitutionalism. The other was a turning away from Hinduism in particular and religion in general, not to land in secularism but to arrive at a form of Buddhism that official Buddhism cannot host, and hence a new *yana*—Navayana as against Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. It is as if Ambedkar was looking for a third way—an in-between that puts under erasure the two poles of liberal discourse and theological discourse; the two poles of the theologizing of liberal political views and the politicizing of Buddha’s views; the two poles of an ab-Original Enlightenment and an ab-Original religion. This is religion as social, which runs counter to the Orientalism of Buddhist studies and to the commodified discourse of “pop” Buddhism.

The Gandhian Conception of Truth

It would not be out of context to foreground for a moment that while Marx generates critical reflection on the “secular,” Gandhi generates critical reflection on “religion.” As Marx generates critical reflection on the secular not to discard it but to rethink the secular, Gandhi also develops critical reflection on religion not to discard it but to rethink religion. Further, while Marx has a “diagnostic relation”⁹ with religion (Marx is focused on what religion is¹⁰), Gandhi has a more etho-poetic relationship with lived religion (Gandhi is focused on what it is to live religion).

Parekh (2001, 37–8) shows how Gandhi’s conception of “cosmic spirit” (*shakti*) needs to be contrasted with the standard Christian view of God.¹¹ In the standard view, God is extracosmic. God preexists the universe. God creates and imposes laws on the universe, and God, though loving, is also powerful and at times punitive. For Gandhi, the universe was eternal and a priori. The cosmic spirit was not a creator but a “principle of order,” regulating the universe from within. The “mysterious” yet “benevolent” cosmic spirit was internal and inspired love and intimacy rather than fear and awe. The cosmos for Gandhi was “not a pyramid of which the material world was the base and human beings the apex, but a series of ever-widening circles encompassing humankind, the sentient world, the material world, and the all including cosmos. Since the cosmic spirit pervaded or infused the universe and was not outside it, the so-called natural world was not natural or material but spiritual” (50). Unlike many believers, Gandhi did not advance the familiar thesis of an omnipotent God who created the universe but instead a much weaker one that entailed there being “some” spiritual power who “gently” guided the universe. Gandhi’s religion thus transcended codified texts and ritualism and involved nothing more than faith in the cosmic spirit and the commitment to realize it in one’s life and action.

For Gandhi, religion was concerned with “how” one lived, not “what” one believed; it was a lived and living faith, not the “dead bone of dogmas.” It had nothing much to do with theology, which overintellectualizes religion and privileges belief over conduct. For Gandhi, not theology but morality was the core of religion, and the latter was not to be judged by the philosophical coherence and subtlety of its system of beliefs. Parekh (2001) argues, “Since one lived out one’s religious beliefs in all areas of life including the political, ‘those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.’”

9. Lacan also has a “diagnostic relation” with theology: “God can either be a face of the Other, and then he becomes a Father-God, author of the Law. Or he is the dark God of jouissance, the God of the mystics: this God is unconscious” (Braungardt 1999). But Lacan also moves toward a radical displacement of theology—Braungardt diagnoses it as “the endpoint of a two-century long project of secularization”—into a “theory of the subject,” recreating the tension between immanence and transcendence within the subject itself.

10. For Marx (1970), religion is “the expression of real distress,” a “protest against real distress,” “the sigh of the oppressed creature,” the “heart of a heartless world,” the “spirit of spiritless conditions,” etc. See the introduction to Marx’s *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy Of Right*.

11. Alternative views of Christianity have been proposed by scholars such as Bloch, Derrida, Agamben, Negri, and Žižek.

Religion, for Gandhi, was a spiritual resource from which one freely borrowed whatever one found persuasive. It was a body of insights to be interpreted in the way one thought proper. His approach to religion was therefore profoundly anti-traditionalist—in a word, antireligious. Gandhi's view placed the human (and not God) at the center of religion and encouraged fresh readings of scriptures. Gandhi also retained the polysemic term *dharma*, which signified nature, [moral] right, and duty (and not religion; see Parekh 2001, 63).

Parekh (2001, 35) also shows how Gandhi moved in 1926 from an earlier formulation that “God is Truth” or “God is the ultimate truth” to “Truth [*sat*] is God”; this move culminates in Gandhi's psychoanalytic autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.¹² Here Gandhi is not conducting experiments to reach the truth, which is usual in the science lab, but is experimenting with truth, with truth itself, with the truth of truth. For Gandhi (2011, 287), truth is a moral notion: “*sat* is employed in the sense of ‘real’ and ‘good’ ... *sat* is also applied to beautiful deeds.” *Sat* is thus trifurcated into the really real, the good/moral deed, and the beautiful/aesthetic act. While Enlightenment science focuses on *sat* as the repository of the really real, Gandhi focuses on *sat* as the register of the moral deed. Tagore (2004) focuses, on the other hand, on *sat* as the register of the aesthetic (truth as “sundarer shadhana,” as the “devoted praxis of the aesthetic”). Bilgrami (2003, 4164) shows that, for Gandhi, truth “is not a cognitive notion at all. It is an experiential notion. It is not propositions purporting to describe the world of which truth is predicated, it is only our own moral experience which is capable of being true.”

The connection we wish to make between Marx's and Gandhi's notion of truth becomes clearer now. Marx is also, as we have seen above, in search of a notion of truth that is not merely cognitive. Marx hence inaugurates in thinking an attention to the overdetermined triad: (1) materiality—both human and the world; (2) the irreducibly social nature of materiality; and (3) praxis as transformative of social materiality and also as birthing truth. If for Gandhi truth is predicated on our own moral experience, for Marx truth is predicated on the ethic of transformative praxis in the material social. Consistent with Marx's dictum, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it,” Gandhi literally produced a philosophy of praxis “in the form of example [the *satyagrahi* as the living moral exemplar] rather than [abstract] principles” (Bilgrami 2003, 4163).

Marxism and Gandhian spirituality are both apposite in their respective yet related departures from post-Enlightenment (and scientific) notions of truth, which are largely abstract and cognitive. Both, however, require handholding from the other. Marxism requires handholding from spirituality on the question of self-transformation (more on this in the section on “askesis”) and on questions of “being-the-embodied-moral-exemplar” (and not the vanguard of scientific socialism or historical-materialist thesis).

12. We see a connection at the level of spiritual exegesis between *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. Hadot (2001, 11, and 10, 179–205) sees the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius (a better translation of the Greek title would be “Exhortations to Himself”) as “spiritual exercises, practiced according to a certain method ... The key to this method, and thus to the *Meditations*, is to be found in the three philosophical *topoi* distinguished by Epictetus ... judgment, desire, and inclination or impulsion ... each of these activities corresponds to a spiritual exercise, a discipline of representation and judgment, a discipline of desire, and a discipline of inclinations or impulses to action.”

This, of course, requires a rethinking of religion and spiritualism, and Gandhi (2011, 277) was attempting such a rethinking in his translation and rereading of the Book of Life, the Bhagavad Gita,¹³ which he held to be the “guide in life,” the book “unrivalled for its spiritual merit”: “The teachings of the Gita are not meant to be merely preserved in a book; they are meant to be translated into action ... to put into practice.”

It has [hence] been my endeavor ... to reduce to practice the teaching of the Gita as I have understood it. The Gita has become for us a spiritual reference book. Even in 1888–89, when I first became acquainted with the Gita, I felt that it was not a historical work, but that, under the guise of physical warfare, it described the [psychological] duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, and that physical warfare was brought in merely to make the description of the internal duel more alluring... The author... has not established the necessity of physical warfare; on the contrary, he has proved its futility. (Gandhi 2011[1980], 12–14)

In the process, the Bhagavad Gita has shown that truth—truth as a moral notion, as ground for moral deeds—is not in violence. Truth is elsewhere. Gandhi’s Bhagavad Gita as guide to moral action, to Gandhi’s moral action (where the Bhagavad Gita is not a book *on* ethics but *of* ethics), is radically different from the conventional guides to violent action wrenched out of the same text through rather conventional and predictable readings (more on the legitimating of violence in Marxian praxis in the last section of the essay).

Spiritualism, however, still requires handholding from Marxism on the question of social transformation (more on this in the section on “phronesis”) and on questions of “being-the-transformative medium-in-the-material social” (and not the one obsessed with individual *moksha*). This of course requires a rethinking of materialism, and Marx is doing exactly that in his “Theses on Feuerbach.” We will see in subsequent sections how the turn to askesis à la Foucault (and Gandhi) and the turn to phronesis à la Heidegger (and Marx) will require two more departures from abstract and cognitive notions of truth. The uneasy *and* between Marxism and spirituality begins to make sense after this fourfold departure in our relations with truth.

The Other Spiritual

Just like the relationship of spirituality to Marxism emerges as interesting once one begins to see materialism as social and practical enouncements and not as facile, dead, or mechanical invocations of the really real; and just like the relationship of Marxism to religion materializes as meaningful once one begins to see religion as lived moral poesies in relation to a personalized God/Truth/*dharma* (and not as blind allegiance to a quasi-dogmatic belief system), as Gandhi did; or religion as ground and spirit for social *moksha*, as Ambedkar did; or religion as unworldly¹⁴ (and not

13. *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi* is based on talks given by the Mahatma at the Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, over a nine-month period between 24 February and 27 November 1926.

14. “As de-legitimization of all worldly sovereign powers, the scandal of religion keeps alive the other absolute demand of mankind for unconditional happiness or justice. It is thus an absolute hope

“otherworldly”), as Das (2014, 19) suggests; just so, the relationship of Marxism to spirituality also becomes evocative when one begins to see spirit (*Geist*) or spiritualism not as “speculative idealism”—not as one arm of the real/speculative, matter/spirit binary, as Marx did (where spiritualism substitutes “self-consciousness” or the “spirit” for the real individual man)—but as:

1. A movement, a quasi-poetic trajectory of “turning and returning” (*en revenant*, returning as ghost, and not as full presence)—“returning home,” but a returning that is “still to come,” to a home that is unhomey; where the invitation, “to come,” is a deferral of a final unveiling of meaning (as against the secure Hegelian return, the “unification” and “gathering function” in Hegel belonging to the metaphysics of the Absolute Spirit as self-thinking thought or self-knowing presence that comes to be “at home,” securely at home); *Geist* then as the restlessness of “never being at home” (à la Derrida’s reading of Heidegger’s reading of Holderlin).
2. Spirit-in-flames (*der Geist is das Flammende*) or “spirit is flame” (*Der Geist ist Flamme*).
3. *Pneuma* understood as the breathing of “sighing and longing” and “not the breath of a self-imposing [Cartesian] voice.”

Derrida (1991, 1) asks in *Of Spirit*, “What is spirit?”: “What might he [i.e., Heidegger] have meant when it comes to ‘spirit’ or the ‘spiritual’?” In fact, “not spirit or the spiritual but *Geist*, *geistig*, *geistlich*.” For the question of spirit or the spiritual will be the question of the *Geist*, *geistig*, and *geistlich*. The question will have to be approached, according to Derrida, “through and through, [as] that of language” because “these German words”¹⁵ do not “allow themselves to be translated.”

Sein und Zeit (1927): what does Heidegger say at that time? ... He warns [avertit]: a certain number of terms will have to be avoided (*vermeiden*). Among them, spirit (*Geist*). In 1953, more than twenty-five years later ... in the great text devoted to [the Austrian poet Georg] Trakl [1887–1914], Heidegger notes that Trakl always took care to avoid (*vermeiden* again) the word *geistig*. And, visibly, Heidegger approves him in this, he thinks the same. But this time, it is not *Geist* nor even *geistlich* which is to be avoided, but *geistig*.

How are we to delimit the difference, and what has happened? What of this meantime? How are we to explain that in twenty-five years, between these two warning signals (“avoid,” “avoid using”) Heidegger made a frequent, regular, marked (if not remarked) use of all this vocabulary, including the adjective *geistig*? And that he

contra all hopelessness of the world. But this hope against all worldly hopelessness is not in turn the ‘other’ world of hope against ‘this’ world of hopelessness, but otherwise than the world at all. Religion is ‘un-worldly’ in that sense and not ‘other-worldly’; happiness is not realized in this ‘worldly’ world, nor in that another world beyond, but which, in its arrival, calls into question each worldly world in the name of the world to come” (Das 2014, 18–9).

15: “*De l’esprit* is a thoroughly French title, much too French to give the sense of the *geistig* or *geistliche* of *Geist* ... This motif of spirit or of the spiritual acquires an extraordinary authority in its German language” (Derrida 1991, 4–5). Did Marx then reduce the pluripotency of *Geist* in the German to the simple matrix “matter/idea”?

often spoke not only of the word “spirit” but, sometimes yielding to the emphatic mode, in the name of spirit? (1–2)

Everything suggests that, from as early as 1933, the date at which, lifting at last the quotation marks, he begins to talk of spirit and in the name of spirit, Heidegger never stopped interrogating the Being of Geist. “What is spirit? Final reply, in 1953: fire, flame, burning, conflagration. Twenty years later” (83).

Is then the spirit that which inflames? No. The spirit is “what inflames itself, setting itself on fire, setting fire to itself ... Spirit is flame. A flame which inflames, or which inflames itself” (Derrida 1991, 84). Spirit in flames, spirit is flame, and spirit as flame stresses the ambivalent or ambiguous duplicity of spirit; spirit can “light up,” spirit can “give light”; spirit can also burn, consume, and destroy. Derrida hence reads spirit as flame, as a mode of burning oneself to virtually “nothing”; also as ashes, ashes as the rem(a)inder of fire, of burning, of consuming, a remainder that reminds us of the fact that consuming or consumption is never ever full; and as ghost (revenant) or return. Such a reading of the spirit/spiritual resets Marxism’s relation with the spirit/spiritual as speculation/idealism.

The concept of spirit has been conventionally constructed in Western philosophy (and also by Marx at times) in terms of a binary opposition to corporeality/materiality (i.e., in opposition to the sensible, the physical, the bodily). Spirit as one of the core or key principles of Western metaphysics has in turn been associated largely with transcendence and has been elevated to an absolute according to which pure spirit resides in the Idea, or God; the physical world on the other hand has been perceived as an “aberrant manifestation of impurity and imperfection” (Gritzner 2011, 86). Derrida, however, building on Heidegger’s reading of Holderlin and Trakl, sees spirit not just as flame but in contrast as ashes and ghosts. For “flame is something which burns while material is present, but in contrast ashes and ghosts are what is still there after material has been reduced to its furthest limit, after the metaphorical fire is extinguished” (Gritzner 2011, 91). For Derrida spirit thus becomes “an uncanny supplement” (88): a revenant (ghost, apparition, but literally “that which returns”); a rem(a)inder of the burnt out, the consumed, the expired, lending in turn to a deferred transcendence. A ghost or revenant would be the trace of the subject that has not ascended to the metaphysical world of pure spirit; its transient “return” thus problematizes the secured opposition between matter and spirit, presence and absence. The Derridean turn to thinking anew around questions of the spirit (and the turn to spirituality) offers us a way to think beyond simple materialism and simple spiritualism.

Spiritual as Phronetic

Dasein, as acting in each case now, is determined by its situation in the largest sense. This situation is in every case different. The circumstances, the givens, the times and the people vary. The meaning of the action itself, i.e. precisely what I want to do, varies as well ... It is precisely the achievement of *phronesis* to disclose the respective Dasein as acting now in the full situation within which it acts and in which it is in each case different ...

... In *phronesis* ... in a momentary glance [*Augenblick*] I survey the concrete situation of action, out of which and in favor of which I resolve [*Entschliesse*] myself.

—Martin Heidegger, *Plato's "Sophist"*

In 1923 at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger delivered a seminar on the Aristotelian concept (invoked in book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) of *phronesis*—*phronesis* as distinct from “*sophia*” and “*episteme*”¹⁶; *phronesis* as the “other reason” or the other (way to) truth; *phronesis* as pointing to “the possibility of developing a critically self-reflective model of ontological knowledge firmly embedded in the finite world” (Long 2002, 36)¹⁷; *phronesis* as being-related to the with-which.

This seminar serves as a dual critique of the forgetting of being in the Occidental tradition and of Enlightenment modernity, which in turn is a critique of abstract and cold Reason. What is *phronesis*? In one sense, practical reason, as distinct from theoretical reason. In another sense, it is reasoning based on concrete action, as distinct from speculative reason. In yet another but related sense, it is reason based on experience as distinct from abstract deductions; *phronesis* is thus “a form of knowledge capable of critically considering [i.e., reflecting upon] the conditions of its own operation” (Long 2002, 36). Where *sophia* seeks “eternal certainty,” *phronesis* settles for the “contingent existence of human beings” and works with “dynamic, contingent principles endemic to ethics” (37); where *sophia* posits the absolute authority of “first principles,” *phronesis* identifies the concrete encounter with the other qua other as the ultimate ground for truth; where *sophia* demeans “being-related to the with-which,” *phronesis* affirms its fundamental significance as a determining condition for truth. *Phronesis* recognizes that truth lies not in ultimates but rather in the give and take between actually existing beings, between self and other, as well as in action, in practice. An ontology directed by *phronesis* rather than *sophia* would not seek refuge in the realm of “universal knowledge” but would recognize its own inherent embeddedness in the world and would thus be capable of critically considering the historico-ethico-political conditions under which it is deployed.

Long (2002) posits two basic features of *sophia*:

1. It attempts to transcend its own embedded contingency by looking toward the eternal.
2. “Philosophical autarky” renders it monological in nature against the two basic features of *phronesis*, as follows.
 - a. *Phronesis* is firmly situated in and directed toward the world of human turbid finitude, as well as human action or practice.

16. Or circumspection as distinct from religious dogma: *phronesis* is attentive to “totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection,” but it is with this totality, however, that “the world announces itself” (Heidegger 1985 [1962], 105).

17. Not just the seminar on *phronesis* but even “an essay like ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ ... offers a number of important insights to a contemporary Marxist criticism wishing to engage with art as a ‘construction’ and an ‘event’ of truth rather than a simple ‘document’ of social reality ... Heidegger’s notion of the philosopher or artist as a figure who uses words and images as ‘tools’ for engaging with his or her environment, as a precondition for *transforming* the world, is surely of continuing relevance if Marxism is to continue functioning as a philosophy of ‘praxis’” (Pawling 2010, 603).

- b. It is “ethically autarkic” and thus dialogical in nature, with both experience and praxis.

Phronesis would thus work to mitigate **violence**—a mitigation important to Marxism—by attending to the **with-which** of the other being with which it is concerned/related. It would recognize this encounter with the other as the site from which both self-critique and critique first become possible and to which it must remain responsible. Its goal would not be the abstract causes of all things but the finite truth that emerges out of mediated encounters—that is, praxis between existing/relating beings.

The phronetic turn also renders truth practical (i.e., as praxis or as action oriented), finite, particular, and in relation with the with-which or the world. Phronesis—which is concerned with things human (*anthropina*) and which arises out of lived experience and what Long (2002) calls “situated empiricism”—thus renders the transcendental and totalizing imagination of the spiritual this-worldly as well as praxis-oriented. The phronetic rewriting of truth—truth that is not born out of the annihilation of the uncertainty endemic to truth, truth that is born out of each particular and practical encounter with the other and the world in which one is embedded—is different from the modern incarnation of sophia, the Enlightenment notion of (scientific) **universals**. The phronetic rewriting of truth, truth emanating out of one’s being in the world’s irreducible sociality and practicality offers the classical spiritual imagination a way (i.e., a path) to be apposite to Marx’s concerns regarding truth: truth as not just social and practical but also as tied to “conscientious apprehension” and “fairness.” The turn to phronesis—as both a register of truth and a mode of being—could take the spiritual closer to Marxism.

The phronetic turn inaugurates the need for the missing perspective of (Marxian) praxis and social action in a rather individualized, at times self-obsessed framework of the spiritual. But if the spiritual lacks the material, social, and transformative social praxis as a ground for truth, then the Marxian attitude lacks self-reflection: reflection on one’s own fascism (see the section titled “Being Anti-Oedipal”) as a ground for one’s search for truth. In a word, if the spiritual lacks action, Marxism lacks reflection. If the spiritual is self-obsessed, Marxism is tragically stripped of the self. The turn to Foucault and to askesis is an attempt to inaugurate the question of the (transformation of) self in Marxism, as well as to undo the utter neglect of the question of the self in much of the Marxian tradition—a question that has traditionally been seen as the exclusive domain of the spiritual tradition.

Marxism as Asketic

Foucault makes an interesting move while foregrounding the spiritual: he does not invoke matter as interlocutor to spirit. His **interlocutor** is **philosophy**. In the process, Foucault sees the spiritual as the praxis of self-transformation.¹⁸ Foucault (2005, 15)

18. This calls for a move from “transition” to “transformation”: the imagination of the political has hitherto been colonized by the concept of transition; it is time to envision the political in terms of transformation—that of self (*à la askesis*) and of the social. Because of this obsession with transition, much of

calls “philosophy” the form of thought that asks what determines truth and falsehood and whether or not we can separate the true from the false, including what it is “that enables the subject to have access to the truth” and that “attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth.” The debate on false and “true-hence-revolutionary” or “revolutionary-hence-true” consciousness in scientific/scientistic Marxism stems from this kind of obsession with one kind of truth, the cognitive kind. Foucault calls spirituality “the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth” (13). Spirituality for Foucault is then “the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject’s very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth” (15–6). The Foucauldian understanding of spirituality postulates that truth is never given to the subject by the simple act of knowledge (*connaissance*); for the subject to have right of access to the truth, the subject must be transformed, and this we see as another radical rereading of truth, after the Marxian, Gandhian, and Heideggerian rereadings of truth. The question is therefore not reducible to the what or the whether of truth but to the how of truth, a question Foucault brings alive in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus* (more on this in the next two sections).

Truth is thus only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject’s being into play; there can be no truth without a transformation of the subject, without (what Foucault calls) the long labor of *askesis*. Foucault’s philosophical praxis appears then to be both a sort of retrieval of a forgotten moment—the moment of the coming together of self-transformation and truth—from a philosophical past and also a problematization of our philosophical present as marked by only one kind of truth—the cognitive notion of truth. By excavating this ancient practice of philosophy (which is also a “philosophy of practice”), Foucault forces contemporary philosophy to come face-to-face with what it has “neglected” hitherto: the self and the politically indispensable task of constituting a praxis-based (and not a theoretical) ethic of the self. Foucault (2005, 29) also argues that, in both Marxism and psychoanalysis (Lacanian psychoanalysis to be precise) there is:

For completely different reasons but with relatively homologous effects, the problem of what is at stake in the subject’s being (of what the subject’s being must be for the subject to have access to truth) and, in return, the question of what aspects of the subject may be transformed by virtue of his access to the truth, well, these two questions, which are once again absolutely typical of spirituality, are found again at the very heart of, or anyway, at the source and outcome of both these knowledges. I am not at all saying that these are forms of spirituality. What I mean is that, taking a historical view over some, or at least one or two millennia, you find again in these forms of knowledge the questions, interrogations, and requirements which, it seems to me, are the very old and

Marxism’s passion and energy has gone into historical materialism. Gandhi and Tagore, on the other hand, are philosophers of transformation, which is why their vision of the political looks a little strange (and also estranged) when evaluated from standard frameworks of transition, either liberal or Marxian.

fundamental questions of the *epimeleia heautou*,¹⁹ and so of spirituality as a condition of access to the truth. What has happened, of course, is that neither of these two forms of knowledge has openly considered this point of view clearly and willingly. There has been an attempt to conceal the conditions of spirituality specific to these forms of knowledge within a number of social forms.

The distinction Foucault marks between philosophy and spirituality, between asceticism and askesis, helps us rethink not just the relationships between Marxism and truth and Marxism and spirituality but between Marxism as an academic discipline and Marxism as a “way of living”—a way of living counter to all forms of (inner) fascism. Can such ways of living Marxism (like living religion for Gandhi)—living like a Marxist, being Marxist as against speaking or writing Marxism—be seen as a way of becoming (postcapitalist), as Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013) have shown in their efforts at taking back the economy? Can Marxism then be seen as an everyday exercise and not just an analysis (say, class analysis) or thought, where the purpose of the exercise is not just to transform the world but to also transform oneself, an exercise classically handed over to the spiritual tradition? Marxism has largely become “the way one sees,” or “to regard otherwise the same things,” but it has not been the way one transforms oneself. “Marxism as asketic” or “asketic Marxism” is then not just a form of accumulating knowledge about labor but is about labor itself, is about laboring: laboring in the household, as Fraad, Resnick, and Wolff (1994) show; laboring to labor; in a word, laboring as a kind of (postcapitalist) praxis à la Gibson-Graham (2006), where postcapitalist praxis is not necessarily the practice of self-denial.

Being Anti-Oedipal

Foucault sees *Anti-Oedipus* as a book of (and not “on”) ethics: a book of ethical action and living; a book that, like the Bhagavad Gita, is not *on* ethics (which is usual in philosophy) but that is a book of ethics, a book that itself, in itself, exudes ethics. But how can a book be ethical? Being anti-Oedipal, becoming anti-Oedipal, is for Foucault—who stands at the threshold of foregrounding concepts like Greek askesis (as against Christian asceticism)—a way not just of thinking (the ethical) but of living (the ethical). In that sense, the anti-Oedipal impulse displaces the ethical, first from the cognitive to the practical and then from the phronetic to the asketic. The question of *Anti-Oedipus*, or the “anti-Oedipal question,” is: “How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant?... The Christian moralists sought out the traces of the flesh lodged deep within the soul. Deleuze and Guattari, for their part, pursue the slightest traces of fascism in the body” (Foucault 2000, xv).

19. *Epimeleia heautou* or “care of oneself is a sort of thorn which must be stuck in men’s flesh, driven into their existence... *epimeleia heautou* is an attitude towards the self, others, and the world... *epimeleia heautou* is also a certain form of attention, of looking. Being concerned about oneself implies that we look away from the outside... we must convert our looking from the outside, from others and the world etc., towards ‘oneself.’ The *epimeleia* also always designates a number of actions exercised on the self by the self, actions by which one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself” (Foucault 2005, 8–11).

Foucault thus marks a sharp distinction between *Anti-Oedipus* the book and “anti-Oedipus” the subject, between *Anti-Oedipus* the written text and “anti-Oedipus” the being—that is, being anti-Oedipal, the process of becoming, the praxis, the art, but not art as an object; rather, art as artisanal, art as the art of, the art of doing-living-being. In other words, Foucault renders anti-Oedipus, or the anti-Oedipal (as against the Oedipal), asketic. He thus replaces the cognitive notion of ethics with the practical and the self-transformative perspective.

Thus, while the Oedipal subject is a hopelessly melancholic victim-subject of the foundational asceticism of being-in-the-family, and while the Oedipal is a product of the “multiplicity of desire” being subjugated to the “twofold law of structure and lack” (i.e., to the totem and the taboo) in psychoanalysis, the anti-Oedipal is an art of living—that is, living desire. Thus, while the Oedipal is about a tragic “subject of asceticism,” the anti-Oedipal is about the asketic praxis of necessary transformations of the self, a praxis that keeps eros alive (here Foucault sharply distinguishes between Christian asceticism and Greek askesis; see Foucault 2005, 10). There is thus a connection between *Anti-Oedipus* by Deleuze and Guattari—published in 1972—and *Hermeneutics of the Subject* by Foucault, lectures delivered in 1982. The anti-Oedipal is thus for Foucault (2000, xiv) a “tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives.”

The history of Marxism (and the history of religion) has been a history of violence. Can Marxism (and religion) track down its own fascism? Does the spiritual deficit in Marxism stem from the inability to set up a relationship with violence (as Gandhi did)? Does the inability to set up a relationship with violence lead to the spiritual deficit? Marxists have stood for social change, but the labor of change was made to fit the framework of historical materialism, a framework that offered legitimating ground to the colonization of Tibet by the Peoples Republic of China—legitimating in the name of progress, growth, developmentalism, scientism and secularization, and also liberation from what Chinese secular orthodoxy saw as recalcitrant religious orthodoxy “out in left field” (Spivak 1994, 46).²⁰ That change was also instituted in haste. It was done without the kind of “work on the self” that (Freud foregrounds and) Foucault talks of in *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. The dream of Marxian social transformation without a (pre)cursor of self-transformation becomes a nightmare. The praxis of self-

20. “Out in left field,” Ama Adhe—an eighty-six-year-old Tibetan woman—spent twenty-seven years of her life (1958–85) in a Chinese prison. She now lives in exile in India. Her crimes: she retained faith in a kind of Buddhism torn in turn between a pre-Buddhist paganism of nature Gods and a Tantric sublime; she maintained obeisance toward a spiritual healer, the 14th Dalai Lama; her life perspectives and personal standpoints were not in tune with “Chinese Marxism,” which in turn was a shorthand for “Han nationalism,” “modern statecraft,” “democratic centralism” (with little attention to the “democratic”), the “rule of Party priests” in the name of the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” etc., and what could be called “secular theologisms” or “theological secularisms” (see Tapontsang 1997). What would contemporary efforts at rethinking Marxism make of the story of this woman? How would it reflect or fold back on the given idioms of Marxism? Would it? Let us also not forget, in the process, the story of the other left field, Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism, which corners, pulverizes, and violates the rights of countless Tamilians, both Hindu and Muslim.

transformation without an antecedent or a parallel praxis of social liberation becomes individualized forms of self-liberation and, hence, alienation from the world.

“An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities”²¹

How would Marxism (and spirituality) conceptualize and bring to everyday practice—make, in other words, a “way of living”—the difficult dialectic of social transformation and self-transformation, as well as the dialectic of phronesis and askesis? How would Marxists remain aware and infinitely reflexive about all the varieties of fascism, from the “enormous ones ... that crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives” (Foucault 2000, xiv), as well as our everyday praxis? What would be the relationships between transformative class praxis, violence, and postcapitalist futures?

Cohen (1986, 227) summed up historical materialism as revolutionary by suggesting that it places “growth of human powers at the center of the historical process ... and it predicts large-scale social transformations, and it claims that their course is violent.” Cohen thus justifies violence and makes the philosophy, vision, and praxis of Marxian social transformation indissolubly and inalienably tied to (proletarian) counter violence against the ruling class. Much of the history of proletarian statecraft stands as testimony to Cohen’s argument for violence. Much of the history of Marxist praxis has rendered the manner of social transformation and its leftovers rather unpalatable; they certainly have not represented much of a move toward creating a social humanity or a human sociality, as Marx suggested. Is there any other path to social transformation?

We believe there is. But for that, Marxian thinking had to be displaced—precisely the contribution of Resnick and Wolff (1987, 2002, 2006), who argued for abandoning the classical understanding of class in terms of the ownership/nonownership of property/power in favor of an understanding of class as process pertaining to surplus labor. Resnick and Wolff of course did not address the question of spirituality but shifted Marxism onto a softer ground (from its extant hard, rock-like existence where nothing more can be written and no guests are allowed). In the classical understanding of “class as noun,” classes are divided into two antagonistic groups that struggle against one another. Class struggle is hence, à la Cohen, a struggle between antagonistic human groups, entities, and identities so as to either annihilate each other or expropriate one another. The violent annihilation of capitalists—in their real and embodied forms—becomes the natural fallout of expropriating the expropriators through the socialization of property, as it happened in the Soviet Union and in China. Therefore, whatever maybe the context and content of the struggle against extant oppressions and its success/failure, the primacy of violence remained embodied in the structure of Marxian struggle, in the institutions it shaped, and in its very exercises, including those conducted on itself (purges, prison/labor/rectification camps, etc.). At times, the violence projected onto capitalists was tragically directed at and inflicted upon

21. See Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013).

others: minorities, ethnic communities, religious sects, precapitalist relics, and so on, as in the case of Tibet.

In contrast, Resnick and Wolff understood class not as a noun, not as a group of people, but as a process of (the performance, appropriation, distribution, and receipt of) surplus labor, and they understood class struggle as a struggle over processes of surplus performance and appropriation that takes place between contingently placed subjects. The fundamental praxis of Marxian struggle, post-Resnick and Wolff, is to transform the extant organizations of surplus from exploitative to nonexploitative, and the essential site of social transformation is the processes (of surplus labor) pertaining to appropriation (see Cullenberg 1992). The struggle for social transformation does not necessitate violence because the struggle is not against capitalists as embodied entities per se but is in class processes, a subtle but decisive and fundamental difference. The annihilation of capitalists without eliminating exploitation (as happened in the erstwhile Soviet Union) would hardly be considered an appropriate political transformation in Marx's terms; it would only replace (as in the Soviet Union) private capitalists with state capitalists by virtue of the fact that the surplus is now appropriated from the workers by bureaucrats connected to the state (see Resnick and Wolff 2002). The focus of Marxian social transformation is hence not the annihilation of a class of people, capitalists, but the annihilation of exploitative class processes (just as the "annihilation of caste" for Ambedkar did not mean the annihilation of a class of people, Brahmins, but the annihilation of processes of caste oppression and caste-based humiliation embedded, in turn, in extant casts of mind). The end of capitalism hence need not be altogether inconsistent with "nonviolence."

This brings us to the question of the self, one's inner seeds of fascism, and self-transformation (as invoked in the section, "Marxism as Asketic"). Resnick and Wolff's analysis of class as a contingent process of performance and appropriation (and also distribution and receipt) of surplus labor entails that the "classed subject" can occupy, at one and the same time, multiple and contradictory class positions; thus, the subject exploited at the office/factory could be an exploiter at home. The question of exploitation hence moves from the capitalist "enemy" to be liquidated and returns all the way back home, to the self. It renders explicit that exploitation embodied by/in the self; such subtle complicity in exploitation points to the secret and disavowed seeds of fascist content in our subjectivities. Marxism, after the turn to class as process, remains reflexive about these multiple instances of exploitation as containers for and sources of deep-rooted fascism.

Class struggle or social transformation is thus not just that which occurs with respect to processes in which others are persecutors who hence need to be counterpersecuted, but it occurs with respect to processes in which the self can be the persecutor. It is then a "movement," "a quasi-poetic trajectory" of turning toward one's own violence,²² one's own fascism, or a return to the truth and the self-realization of how one is also an appropriator of surplus and not just a performer—that is, how one is also an exploiter, even if minimally, even when one is exploited—exploitation coming to finally haunt oneself. Geist here is the restlessness of "never being at home," either as bourgeoisie

22. As Derrida suggests in his rereading of Geist—Geist not as speculation or idealism. And it is this returning that makes Marxism apposite to the spiritual.

or as proletariat; one is always already unhomey. Marxism, after Resnick and Wolff, thus becomes a critically self-reflective model of ontological knowledge firmly embedded in the finite world; it is a process of being reflexively related to the with-which of class processes and classed subject positions. Class as process is thus the *Grundrisse* to the kind of ascetic work Foucault talks of. It also shows to the self the importance of “self-conversion” rather than “exteriorized coercion.”

Further, phronesis as a turning to the not-too-easily-assailable other puts to question the convention of the distinction—which is also the conventional distinction—between “left” and “right” in much of Marxism. It also puts to question the time-space curvature of the political. The given distinction between the Left and the Right come to occupy different meanings after the phronetic turn: “left” comes to mean, at the very least, that the political as such is receptive to what is at stake in the community. On the other hand, “right” comes to mean that the political is merely in charge of order and administration (Nancy 1991). In this sense the political is indissociable from something that the word “communism” has expressed all too poorly, even as it remains the only word to point toward it. The political after the phronetic turn is the place where the community-as-Other is brought into play; the political is the place of the community-as-Other; the place of a specific existence, the existence of being-in-common, which gives rise to the existence of being-self. The phronetic turn—say, as embodied in the Community Economies work of Gibson-Graham et al.—adds substance and flesh to Marx’s stress on the irreducible and inescapably social nature of all humanity in the “Theses on Feuerbach.”

This is not to ignore or demote the praxis of transformation in two other possible forms: “mass movements” or even “social revolution.” Rather, the point is to argue that “self-transformation,” “social transformation,” and “political transformation” (see Chakrabarti and Dhar 2015) must proceed in tandem and along overdetermined axes, and for that to happen, different routes are available, the above being an example of one possible route. A slightly different route is the Gandhian idea of “social revolution” that, after our working through the “four other notions of truth,” can be construed as based on a philosophy of transformation that works toward a displacement of the self, social, and political axes at the micro level, accompanied by a movement for *janajagaran* (mass awakening)—but mass awakening way beyond “identitarian nationalisms” (as of extant right-wing practices; see Chakrabarti and Dhar 2012) and “secular universalism” (as of extant left-wing ideologues).²³ The elements of

23. Pyarelal (1951, 160), a close associate of Gandhi, observed that the ruling principle of Gandhi’s Ashram life was “to each according to his need, from each according to his capacity.” This is a communist principle. In this regard, “His Ashrams are thus themselves experiments in Communism based on non-violence and Indian village conditions.” Gandhi (1951, 152) confronted the Indian Communists thus: “You claim to be Communists, but you do not seem to live the life of Communism. I may tell you that I am trying my best to live up to the ideal of Communism in the best sense of the term.” Finally, Gandhi argued against the Communists by insisting on the importance of self-social transformation: “Socialism is a beautiful word ... In order to reach this state we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us. Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in

Gandhi's "phronetic turn" through practices of rural Swaraj (imperfectly translated as "self-rule"), in reshaping the construction of the self (i.e., our moral compass of truth and freedom), and in community/"nation" building (his work in Ashrams, abodes of moral collectivities), accompanied by mass movements such as in the form of the Quit India Movement, had to be in sync with one another. There was no freedom outside of their mutually constitutive complexity: "If we become free, India is free" (Gandhi 2010, 59)—the idea and existence of self and collective cannot be detached, except by paying a heavy price.

As we understand, it was only in the overdetermination of the three axes that the truth and freedom he sought would be achieved and unalienated life—as Marx (1987) also longed for—reclaimed. At the least then, **without recovering our anti-Oedipal moral compass through the ascetic and the phronetic turn of self-realization, action, and construction, including self-transformation and social transformation, unalienated life will remain a distant dream and mass awakening/movements will collapse into dystopias (as in the Soviet Union and China).** To truly live up to what Marxism says and to what it seeks, as well as what it ought to practice (in which it has failed time and again), the phronesis of social revolution needs to be sung in askesis—that is, in the unending spiritual stream of self-transformation.

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